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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1036
INFO RUEHZO/AFRICAN UNION COLLECTIVE

UNCLAS LIBREVILLE 000134

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: PGOV CASC TP

SUBJECT: SAO TOME AND PRINCIPE: TWO SOLDIERS DEAD AFTER
PERSONAL DISPUTE IN PRIME MINISTER,S COMPOUND

REF: LIBREVILLE 128

¶1. An apparent personal altercation ended in a fatal shootout between two soldiers on guard duty at Prime Minister Rapheal Branco's government compound in the early morning hours of April 2. In the midst of an argument between the two soldiers, one soldier shot the other in the chest and was killed instantly by the wounded soldier's return fire. The surviving soldier was taken to the hospital, where he later died from the single gunshot wound. There were no reports of other injuries. In a public statement, a police spokesman ruled out any political motivation for the shooting and said that the incident was apparently the result of an argument between the two soldiers. An investigation is underway.

¶2. According to Embassy local employees in Sao Tome, small numbers of soldiers have been called upon to reinforce police security at various government buildings since February, when 38 members of the disbanded paramilitary group known as the Buffaloes were charged with plotting a coup (reftel). Commander of the Army Idalecio Pachire apologized for the latest incident and called the loss of life senseless.

REDDICK